

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE DIRECTOR FEARS POOR WATERFOWL NESTING CONDITIONS

Dr. John S. Gottschalk, director of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, said today he is apprehensive about waterfowl nesting conditions in northern prairie "duck factory" regions.

Surveys are indicating exceptionally dry habitat on the vital breeding grounds in the Dakotas, western Minnesota, eastern Montana, and large parts of the prairies of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Without considerable rainfall in coming weeks, many ducks may find their homes dried up before broods are on the wing. With the prospect of reduced fall flights, waterfowl hunting regulations set by the Bureau in August may have to be more restrictive.

"I know that I may be accused of 'crepe hanging' early," Dr. Gottschalk said, "but I believe the public is interested in our work and entitled to know what our field personnel see and think as the surveys progress during spring and summer.

"Normally our crews find fewer water-filled potholes in July surveys than in May. Abundant summer rains could help maintain present brood waters, but it would take exceptional rainfall to recharge the potholes during the summer," Dr. Gottschalk said.

The present critical situation has been caused by a "mild" winter and less than normal rainfall since last summer. Some areas have been described by aerial crews as drier this year than at any other time since the surveys began 20 years ago.

Observations of water levels are made by the Bureau in cooperation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, state and provincial agencies, and Ducks Unlimited, Canada.

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